

**CLAIMS**

What is claimed is:

5    1. A truck bed cover for covering a truck bed, wherein the truck bed extends between a pair  
of side rails and adjacent a cabin to a tail gate, the truck bed cover comprising:  
a plurality of overlapping panels; and  
a means for associating the plurality of overlapping panels such that the plurality of  
overlapping panels are movable between an extended configuration, wherein  
10      the plurality of overlapping panels are extended in combination from adjacent  
the cabin to the tail gate by sliding, and a stored configuration, wherein the  
plurality of overlapping panels are stacked vertically within or adjacent to the  
truck bed.

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2. The truck bed cover as recited in claim 1, wherein the plurality of overlapping panels are retractable in combination to adjacent the cabin by sliding.
3. The truck bed cover as recited in claim 1, further comprising stair-stepped surfaces  
5 extending from each of the side rails for supporting the plurality of overlapping panels when the plurality of overlapping panels are disposed in the extended configuration.
4. The truck bed cover as recited in claim 1, further comprising a surface extending from each of the side rails for supporting the plurality of overlapping panels when the plurality of  
10 overlapping panels are disposed in the stowed position.
5. The truck bed cover as recited in claim 1, wherein the surface is a generally vertical ridge.
6. The truck bed cover as recited in claim 1, wherein each of the panels comprises opposed  
15 front and rear edges, and wherein when the panels are extended from adjacent the cabin to the tail gate, the front edge of one of the panels is positioned adjacent to the cabin, and the front edges of the remaining panels extend toward the cabin.
7. The truck bed cover as recited in claim 6, wherein when the panels are extended from  
20 adjacent the cabin to the tail gate, the rear edge of one of the panels is positioned adjacent to the tail gate, and the rear edges of the remaining panels extend toward the tail gate.

8. The truck bed cover as recited in claim 6, wherein the plurality of overlapping panels comprises a first panel, a second panel, and a third panel, and wherein when the panels are extended from adjacent the cabin to the tail gate, the front edge of the second panel is positioned above the first panel, and the front edge of the third panel is positioned above the  
5 second panel.

9. The truck bed cover as recited in claim 8, wherein when the panels are extended from adjacent the cabin to the tail gate, the front edge of the first panels is positioned adjacent to the cabin, and the rear edge of one of the third panel is positioned adjacent to the tail gate.

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10. The truck bed cover as recited in claim 1, further comprising:

a pair of side frames each positioned adjacent to a different one of the side rails and adapted to support each of the panels when the panels are extended from adjacent the cabin to the tail gate.

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11. The truck bed cover as recited in claim 10, wherein each of the side frames comprises a plurality of surfaces each adapted to support a different one of the panels when the panels are extended from adjacent the cabin to the tail gate.

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12. The truck bed cover as recited in claim 1, wherein one of the panels includes a handle and at least one lock mechanism.

13. The truck bed cover as recited in claim 1, further comprising a holding bar coupled to a  
5 rear wall of the cabin and extending between the side rails for preventing the panels from being lifted up when the panels are extended from the rear wall of the cabin to the tail gate.

14. A cargo bed cover for covering a cargo bed, wherein the cargo bed extends between a pair of side rails, a front wall, and a rear wall, the cargo bed cover comprising:

a plurality of overlapping panels; and

a means for associating the plurality of overlapping panels such that the panels are

5                   movable between an extended configuration, wherein the plurality of overlapping panels are extended in combination from the front wall to the rear wall, and a stored configuration, wherein the plurality of overlapping panels are stacked vertically within or adjacent to the cargo bed.

15. The cargo bed cover as recited in claim 14, wherein the plurality of overlapping panels are retractable in combination to adjacent the front wall by sliding.

16. The cargo bed cover as recited in claim 14, further comprising stair-stepped surfaces  
5 extending from each of the side rails for supporting the plurality of overlapping panels when the plurality of overlapping panels are disposed in the extended configuration.

17. The cargo bed cover as recited in claim 14, further comprising a surface extending from each of the side rails for supporting the plurality of overlapping panels when the plurality of  
10 overlapping panels are disposed in the stowed position.

18. A method for retracting a truck bed cover extending over a truck bed between a pair of side rails and from a rear wall of a cabin to a tail gate, the method comprising:

sliding a plurality of panels of the truck bed cover over one another from the tail gate toward the rear wall of the cabin until the panels are substantially horizontally stacked over one another adjacent to the rear wall of the cabin;

5           stacked over one another adjacent to the rear wall of the cabin;

rotating the stacked panels to a vertical orientation; and

lowering the stacked panels vertically along the rear wall of the cabin and into the truck bed.

19. A cargo container for use in an automotive vehicle, comprising:

a first side and an opposed second side;

a plurality of overlapping panels; and

a means for associating the plurality of overlapping panels such that the panels are

5                   movable between an extended configuration, wherein the plurality of overlapping panels are extended in combination from the first side to the second side, and a stored configuration, wherein the plurality of overlapping panels are stacked vertically adjacent to the first side.

10         20. The cargo container as recited in claim 19, further comprising a surface for supporting the plurality of panels in the stored configuration.